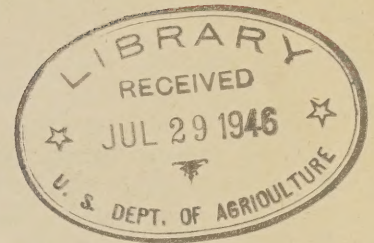


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RURAL LIFE TRENDS PROJECT

Oneida County,
New York

A. Shifts in Farm Manpower Patterns

B. Shifts in Medical Facilities and Practices

REPORT NO. 1
October 1942

COUNTY SUMMARY - ONEIDA COUNTY, N. Y.

October 1942

Manpower

Because of the drains on farm help of defense industrial work and the draft, there is an acute shortage of skilled dairy farm hands in this County. Two large arms works, an enormous air depot and a copper and brass works in the County are all paying high wages and employing almost all the available men in the County. In more than one of these factories, women are being hired to replace men who have been drafted. Voluntary enlistments have also contributed to the labor shortage. Farmers say that many farm boys enlisted because they were afraid that people in their communities would scorn them for "sticking safe at home on the farm" instead of getting into the fight.

Leading farmers estimate that 80 to 90 percent of the farms in the County are operating shorthanded. Farm wives and children are doing field work which they have never done before. Interviewers observed women unloading corn for ensiling, pitching hay and digging potatoes, and cases of women doing most of the milking; extensive tractor driving and other field work have been reported. Farm women are ordinarily glad to help out in the fields -- "They pity the men, working so hard" a Home Demonstration Agent put it -- but most farmers don't like to have their wives doing "men's work." "It just don't look right to see a woman out in the field" one farmer said.

Dairy farmers have had less success with new sources of help than have cash crop farmers. The latter have imported Negroes to pick beans and potatoes, have used high school boys (and sometimes girls) for picking potatoes and apples, and both farm and city women for these and other picking operations.

Dairy farmers usually express the opinion that women and urban high school boys are not able to replace regular farm hands because 1) they are not strong enough, and/or 2) they are not skilled or experienced enough.

Most farmers are behind in their work, especially haying and cutting grain, both because of the labor shortage and the wet season. Besides working harder and trying new sources of help, farmers are using their machinery more extensively, are making sure it is properly adjusted, and buying new machinery when they can -- especially pick-up bailers and corn harvesters. Farmers are also inventing new uses for old machinery -- planting squash with a corn planter, and blowing oats up into a bin in the barn with an ensilage cutter for example. They are planning ahead more carefully.

It has been estimated that 10 percent of the farms in the County have sold or substantially reduced their dairy herds and gone out of commercial production; and that 10 percent more will follow by the end of 1942. The cattle are being auctioned and sold out of the County as beef, or, in the case of superior cows, resold to dairymen elsewhere. Farmers have sold out principally because of 1) labor shortage, 2) the lure of industrial wages, or 3) a combination of both.

Besides farm laborers, many small (though not part-time) farmers

have also gone into industry, and a few of these are attempting to run a part-time farming enterprise with reduced livestock and crops.

Leading farmers and members of the Farm Bureau express the opinion that Oneida County dairymen have worked harder this year than ever before, that they have reached the point where they feel that they cannot go on under existing conditions. "Farmers," they say, "are undecided about what to do next year. They want to be patriotic but they can't produce food without help. They want assurance that they'll get labor." These spokesmen say that, unless some relief is provided, farmers will not attempt to meet production goals next year and "a lot of people will go hungry."

Agricultural leaders and farmer committeemen of several agencies concurred in blaming the present situation on industry --agriculture wage differentials. They favored either 1) raising farm prices so that farmers could "come somewhere near paying factory wages," or 2) a strong manpower control in the hands of the Government, so that skilled farm hands could be kept in agriculture and prevented from entering war industry or the draft.

The foregoing opinions accurately reflect those of larger farm operators, with substantial investments and middle-to-high incomes. On small, one-man or family size farms (which leaders say constitute one-half of the farms in the County) the labor situation is not acute, and operators of these enterprises are probably less impressed by labor shortages and less firmly convinced that immediate and decisive Government action is needed.

Medical Service

So far, 61 medical doctors (about one-quarter of all the doctors in the County) have left private practice in Oneida County for the armed forces. The proportion of doctors leaving has been about the same in the two principal cities (Utica and Rome) as in surrounding small towns and villages. Most of the departed doctors are the younger men -- under 45 years old. One medical official opined that the more capable men had left.

All remaining doctors are now overburdened with work, and it seems likely that the medical doctor population cannot be depleted further without impairing medical service seriously.

Hospitals are filled. The obstetrical ward of one Utica hospital has overflowed one floor and taken some beds on another. During April 1942, this hospital, registered as of 140 bed capacity, actually had a daily average of 160 patients.

Increased work for doctors has been a result not only of fewer practicing doctors, but also because of an increase in elective surgery because: 1) people who deferred elective operations through the depression, now have the money to pay for them and want them, and 2) people who are applying for jobs in war industry or for the armed forces are being subjected to physical examinations. Frequently, certain physical defects (hernia, hemorrhoids) must be corrected before the applicant can be passed. This increase in elective surgery will raise the general level of physical fitness, but is putting a strain on medical facilities now.

Overcrowding in house-short defense areas, and fatigue from long hours will probably raise the tuberculosis rate, one official believes. The State Department of Health is pressing for more vaccination (typhoid, diphtheria) and preventative medicine among defense workers.

Several privately-owned farm labor camps in Onocida and adjoining counties are a serious public health problem. Overcrowding, unsanitary sewage disposal and drinking water facilities, besides a high venereal disease rate (particularly among Negro farm laborers) make these camps danger spots.

One official remarked that he has noticed "a widespread, obsessive fear of epidemic among the lay population" whenever the subject of doctors leaving the community was mentioned.

So far, few measures have been taken to adapt to present medical conditions. In one rural community, about to lose its only remaining doctor, aroused public opinion succeeded in keeping the man out of the army. All over the County, doctors are trying to make fewer home calls, to plan their itinerary by not accepting home calls after a certain hour, and by appealing to the public not to call them unless "real, medical attention" is necessary. Yet already one case has been reported of a school girl who fainted, but did not get medical attention until several hours later, and hence had to be hospitalized for several days.

Farmer Interviews
(Raper)

Oncida County, N. Y.
September 22, 1942

Mr. Peters (near Paris, south of Utica)

Peters complained bitterly about farm labor shortage. He is shorthanded and is depending on family labor. His wife is working (in the field) very hard, but he doesn't believe she can keep up her present pace. Under the Sauquoit Valley school plan, his son and daughter are released from school at 12.30 P. M. each day and help him a lot on the farm. He is planning to use high school boys on his potatoes.

Peters contends that farmers have got to have better prices or they won't plant anything next year, although he also says "We know we are in a life and death struggle and we (farmers) are willing to do all we can."

He is a member of Farm Bureau and Dairymen's League, of a potato spray ring and has participated in AAA and SCS. He feels that people in Washington mean well, but don't get out in the field enough to know what farmers are thinking.

Mr. J. M. Cole (in Paris)

Cole owns a small farm and rents additional 100 acres. He was keeping his 15 year old son out of school to fill silo, had hired a 15 year old neighbor boy to help and was changing with a neighbor. Cole says urban high school boys will work all right if properly supervised. Cole's wife has "all she can do in the house," does no field work.

Mr. and Mrs. Totman (S. W. of Paris 4-5 miles toward Sauquoit)

Mrs. Totman says she has been doing a great deal of extra work on the farm. She helped with haying, and, while her husband was working in Savage Arms Company for a couple of months, she did all the milking. She says she likes field work, but, while doing it, she had been forced to let the housework go.

Mr. Totman had gone to work in Savage Arms last winter, but quit this summer because it "was breaking down my health; I couldn't eat and I couldn't sleep. When I got back on the farm I felt much better."

Totman reports that many of his neighbors are working at Savage. There is at least one worker at Savage from half the houses in the area between Sauquoit and Paris. Many farmers are going out of agriculture and into Savage in order to have more money to spend.

Totman disliked the labor policy at Savage. He feels that the company union is inadequate and that holding a job or getting a better one there depends on one's personal standing with the foreman. He says that a real union is needed at Savage. Totman contends that Savage prevented the establishment of a farmers' cooperative market at Utica because this would have raised prices of produce and, indirectly, might have been responsible for Savage employees demanding raises.

Totman also believes that dairy farmers ought to sign up with Lewis' Dairy Union for their protection. He says that the Dairymen's League and Farm Bureau are in cahoots with large milk companies (manufacturers).

He did not plant potatoes this year because he was not sure of getting labor for them. He says he hates to see his wife working in the fields but has no choice, since wages are so high. He says that several Utica women had signed up with the Farm Bureau to work on farms, but had not been given an opportunity to do so. Totman says that two of them, daughters of a bishop, came out to work for him for a couple of days.

He feels that high school children make good help "if you stay with 'em all the time" (supervision), but doesn't think they ought to be allowed to do hard farm work.

He feels that Washington must straighten out the farm labor situation somehow or farmers will just quit.

Neighbor of Totman (no name)

This man had a Negro harvest hand on his place whom he boarded in his home.

He stated that Grove Hinman, who had imported a large number of Negro pickers from the south this summer, was known to have a bad labor record, and that no one would work for Hinman a second year after having been employed by him once. He said that Hinman was wealthy and politically well fixed, and did not need to care how well his record was known; but he did have to get a new labor supply each year from a new source.

The interviewee said he agreed with the Madison County grand jury in their recommendation that the Farm Bureau ought to arrange for better camps next year, that Hinman's camps were overcrowded and unsanitary.

Charlie Baylis and Arthur Tompkins (between Paris and Sauquoit)

(These men are both farmers, exchanging work. They were interviewed on Tompkins' farm.)

Tompkins was working at Savage up until harvest time. Then he quit and he may not return.

Both men said there was no serious labor shortage in the community. Both said they had never hired much labor, and were changing work as usual. They were using machinery to the fullest extent and were mechanizing operations more and more, were using children on tractors. Baylis said his sister-in-law, who had never driven a tractor before, had done this job for them this summer, had been a great help. Tompkins was planning to use boys and girls to pick up potatoes.

Both had all intentions of going ahead as usual next year.

Leo Brennan (near Paris Station)

A strong Farm Bureau member, and a dairyman primarily, Brennan was disturbed over low farm prices, although he stated later that because of the "good" milk price, he had been feeding more grain, was getting better milk production.

He had two teen age boys (sons) who were helping him a lot, and his ten-year-old daughter had driven the tractor some. He was exchanging labor.

Walter Towne (near Clayville)

This man did not complain about labor. He has two hired men, as usual, right along. He says he will get along all right as long as the draft board will keep them deferred. The younger hired man has been deferred once, and Towne will request another deferment when this one runs out.

He has 75 acres, runs a retail milk route selling 500 quarts a day. He produces half, buys half of this milk.

W. H. Rogers (Agricultural Teacher at Sauquoit Valley School)

Rogers formulated the plan, now in operation in this school, for condensing the school day so that all children can be released for half a day, in critical times, for work on farms. Under this plan, the morning session begins half an hour earlier (8.30 instead of 9.00 A.M.), classes are shortened by 10 minutes each, and there are no recesses. All children are released at 12.30 P.M.

Rogers feels that children can perform farm work for only half a day anyway, in most cases. This plan has the advantage of keeping all children "together" rather than releasing some who will miss part of the instruction and keeping others. Hence it eliminates the necessity for special effort on the part of teachers to help the excused children catch up to the rest.

Rogers says that almost all of the children in his school went out to pick up potatoes on the day the interviewer called. He feels that the children can take over the light work and that farmers, by changing off and using machinery to better advantage, can take over the heavy work, thus making the labor situation less critically tight.

Farmer Interviews
(Riecken)

Oneida County, N.Y.
September 22, 1942

Tony Sorrentino (?)

Dairy-truck driver who used to work in a factory and farm part-time. He had a regular hired man to do the farm work while he was gone. When the hired man quit, Tony left the factory and is now working full-time on his farm.

He has decided to reduce his strawberry and sweet corn acreage next year because he will be working full-time without help on the farm and won't have time to go to market with produce.

This year he lost an estimated 3,000 quarts of berries and most of his sweet corn because he couldn't get harvest help.

The Italian women from Rome whom he used to hire for berry picking are not working this year because their husbands, sons or daughters all have defense jobs and the family does not need the money.

Tony hired some young boys and girls (under 14) to pick berries, but, "these kids were no good. They did more damage to the plants than they did any good." Tony figures that this kind of labor is very costly to him.

Tony would use women as laborers, "if they knew anything. But city women wouldn't be any good in a hay field. They don't know enough--they just don't have any experience."

Tony has no family help--2 children under 6 years and a wife ("a city girl") who has had no experience at farm work--is getting along as well as he can by himself and by exchanging labor with his neighbors.

Mr. Hall (near Holland Patent)

Although he has two sons at home (one of whom had been working at Savage Arms, but quit to help out on the place, Hall feels that he is operating his 200 acres short-handed. He has 89 head of stock, about 50 of which are milking cows.

For part of this summer (1942) Hall had an urban high school boy from New Jersey working as a general hand on the farm. The boy's relatives, who live near Hall, arranged for the job. The boy had to pass off a requirement for Cornell's vet course of a certain number of months work on a farm. The boy started off all right but, Hall feels, he was not physically strong; in late July the boy told Hall he would have to quit "because he was all tired out and couldn't keep seeing any longer."

Hall hired two local high school boys one day last week (the boys had been released from school for harvest work). "One of 'em did a lot of work, for his size, but the other was no dam good -- too lazy." Hall feels that most village and town boys are too inexperienced and that farm boys have enough work on their home places.

He feels the same way about women. City women are inexperienced and farm women have enough work to do now.

He is not exchanging help with neighbors this year "because we're all short-handed and we want to do the work at the same time."

He used a combine for the first time this year, didn't like it, and went back to a threshing machine. Feels that with a combine, he must leave the grain standing too long and may lose it.

Feels that draft board has been fair to farmers, but he doesn't understand why they are taking in (the army) young men who could be producing food, when, after they get them, they don't have any place to put them, nor any equipment to give them." (He seems to be holding on to an outmoded attitude--one that applied a year ago but probably doesn't today.)

Mrs. Watson

A tenant (cash rent) family with a large family. Three daughters (aged 17 to 20) are all working either at Rome Air Depot or at Rome Wire and Cable. Mrs. Watson feels that it is better for them to work there for high cash wages which are getting the family out of debt, than to work on the farm. Two sons (13 and 15) are helping on the farm.

They usually had an extra man during the summer, but this year Mr. Watson and the boys "got along by working harder." They also exchanged work with neighbors during haying.

Mrs. Watson has been out digging potatoes and will continue this work. "It's the first time I ever dug potatoes because I had to," she says, "but I don't think it hurts a body to get out and work. I'm not very good at it, but I don't mind it (field work)."

Mr. Fillmore (near Holland Patent)

Operates a large apple orchard, does not have any other farm business.

He usually hired two men during the summer, this year got along with one high school boy full-time and another part of the summer. He bought a new sprayer which saves him a great deal of time and labor--the labor of two men, he estimates--and feels sure he could not have gotten through without it.

For harvest labor he has several people who were released from a local canning factory after the green bean pack was finished. He also has some (farm) women picking up apples off the ground--he won't let them go up on the ladders however. He also has two or three local young men who are on the night shift in the brass mill and are picking apples daytime, as well as two men from Savage who had last Saturday and Sunday off and came to pick. He has not found any city women who want to work on farms.

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Mr. Warcup (Steuben)

Says he is "an old-fashioned farmer" who has a 30 cow dairy and ships to a nearby cheese factory. He is working short-handed, has been all summer. He has no family help and his wife does no field work--she is not physically able to and, besides, "she's got enough to do in the house."

The only farm help available, he says, is old men over 50 or 55 years of age, "and drunk most of the time. You can't depend on them."

Mr. Warcup's only adaptation to labor shortage is working harder and getting behind in his work. He says that high school boys make good help, but he did not try to get any this year. He makes most of his milk in the summer, has very little to do in the winter.

(Did not get name--near Rome)

This man has been a part-time farmer and mill worker since 1936 and is trying to keep both enterprises going now, but having an awfully tough time of it. He has paid off a good deal of farm debt, has a good dairy herd and would like to go farming full-time. However, he feels obligated to stay at the mill since, he is an experienced man, the mill is operating at full speed and needs workers.

Usually he hires one married man year-round to do milking and take care of the place, while he (owner) helps out after work. Now he has only a young single man who cannot do all the work, and an elderly (77 years old) man to do odd jobs and chores. He is afraid that the young man may not be deferred and this will leave him seriously short-handed.

He cultivated and cut all his corn this season at night, by putting lights on the tractor.

(Daughter of an Italian vegetable farmer on muck land near Rome)

Operator (father) is going to Syracuse twice a week to market now rather than five times a week to Utica because farm is short-handed and the new marketing arrangement saves time. Less produce is sold at the roadside stand because of gas rationing--no customers.

The Italian (lower class) women from Rome who used to pick potatoes, onions, etc., are not coming out to work on the muck land this year. They have been going out to pick beans instead because it is cleaner, somewhat better paying work.

This operator hired school kids during the summer for hoeing and weeding, but now all the children are back in school.

The whole family is working in the fields this year. The women of the family have never done field work before. The daughter commented, "I never work on the land before this; this year I work like a pig. Oh, I like it (field work) all right; I like it better than in the house."

Dr. F. M. Miller, M. D., 293 Genesee Street, Utica, N. Y.

Dr. F. M. Miller, Jr., of the Oneida County Medical Association, made the following pertinent statements:

To date, some 61 doctors (medical doctors and dentists) have left private practice for the armed services. For the most part, these are men of under 40, or, at least, of under 45 years of age.

All medical doctors in the County are now overburdened with work. Hospitals are filled. The obstetrical ward of St. Elizabeth's Hospital (Utica) has been completely filled lately and an overflow of six-seven mothers placed in another section of the hospital.

During April, one local hospital, registered as of 140 bed capacity, accommodated a daily average of 160 persons.

Increased work for doctors has been a result, not of epidemic or higher sickness rates, but rather of the war boom in two main ways:

Elective surgery, which people deferred during the depression, is the principal reason for crowded hospitals. In these times, people want to have desirable (although not absolutely vital) operations performed, since they can at last afford them. This will result in a better health level but is crowding hospitals.

Second main source of increased patients is a related phenomenon. Many persons are now getting, or trying for jobs in war industries, which require a physical examination. Not only is the demand for examination crowding doctors, but also, physical defects (hernia, hemorrhoids) which must be corrected before the applicant will be hired, are being discovered and remedied.

Osteopaths and European refugee medics will probably benefit from the current drain on medical doctors into the armed forces. There are more too many midwives in the County. "In a way, it's our own (doctors') fault. For years, we've encouraged our patients to go to hospitals to have their babies. Now we wish multiparous births could be cared for at home by midwives."

Meeting of Farm Leaders
New Hartford, N. Y.

Oneida County, N. Y.
September 22, 1942

(The following notes were made by Dr. Raper and Mr. Riecken at a meeting of farm committeemen of various agencies active in Oneida County. The following were present: Earl C. Foster, County Farm Bureau Agent; Robert Hayden, Manager of Utica Branch Office, Syracuse Production Credit; Edward Reddell, Manager of Oneida, New York Office of Farm Security; the Home Demonstration Agent and the 4-H Club Leader for the County; and the following farmer committeemen: Bill Hemming, AAA Chairman; Dave Agnes, President of the Farm Bureau; Albert Ellingswood, County Leader of Extension Minutemen (neighborhood leaders); Harold Craig, Orange representative) Bill Roberts, Dick Hughes, and Harry Goodson representing other agencies.

This meeting had been called to select the county farm machinery rationing board. After this was done, the meeting was given over to a discussion of the questions raised by Dr. Raper and Mr. Riecken. Individual speakers are not identified.)

Manpower

Almost all farms are operating short-handed owing to the drain of help by Savago, Remington, Revere Brass, and the Home Depot. Local draft boards have been as fair as they can be, but they have been forced to take farm labor in some areas which are entirely rural.

Lots of farmers are going into war industry because they can make more money there. These are genuine small farmers, not part-time or back-yard farmers.

Dairy cows are being auctioned off to other areas and for beef. With farm help the way it is now, this trend may increase.

Farmers are doing more work, and yet getting behind in their work. Even men who have always had their hay out on time in other years are behind now. Not only has labor been short, but the wet season has also kept farmers back.

High school boys are being considered for harvesting apples, and several farmers have tried them. In most cases farmers are cooperating with school principals and placing their requests for boys through these officials. In a couple of instances, non-farm boys have been used. Farm boys generally have enough work on their home farms to keep them busy.

School boys and girls from the villages have also been used to pick up potatoes. High school boys have been hired to drive trucks and tractors and children even as young as nine and ten years old have been used to drive tractors. One farmer, however, declared, "It ain't right for a nine year old boy to drive a tractor. His little arms ain't strong enough for that."

Women, particularly farmers' wives, are doing men's work. "They generally do it because they pity the menfolks working so hard," remarked the Home Demonstration Agent. Italian and Polish women from Utica have, as usual, been picking vegetables and fruit.

Southern Negroes have been imported to work as pickers on the cash crop farms in southern Ocala and next-door Marion County. Others report that Negroes are usually much better pickers than local Italian women.

An offer to send several conscientious objectors to the County for farm laborers was flatly rejected by the Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, Chamber of Commerce, and by several farm operators.

In general, farmers are planning ahead more, performing their operations more efficiently. They are using machinery to an increasing extent, are seeing that it is more carefully adjusted, are buying new machinery (especially milking machines, corn harvesters, pick-up balers, forming potato spray rings).

Many are inventing new uses for present machinery. One man, operating a fair sized farm, has rigged out a buck rake for his tractor and is able to haul as much hay into the barn with this as he and a hired man used to do with a loader and rack. Another, unable to get enough labor for hand planting, put in his squatch by adapting his corn planter. He removed the can which sits on top of the tube and replaced it with a funnel. He then built a small platform on which his daughter could stand and drop single seeds in the funnel at proper intervals. Spacing the seed evenly was done by tying colored rags to the wheels of the corn planter at proper intervals. The rig worked very satisfactorily. Still a third man, to save space and labor in storing his oats, built a bin just over the driveway and under the eaves of the barn. He set up an old hisilage cutter blower, built a hopper attachment and simply blew his oats up into the bin.

Not only defense industry and the draft, but also voluntary enlistments have cleaned out some of the farm labor. Many farm boys have enlisted to keep from being asked (scornfully) by local people, "What are you doing around here? Why aren't you in the army?" In a sense they have been razzed into enlisting.

Most of the foregoing material applies to the larger farms in the County. The small, one-man, or family size farms, are in much better shape, and their operators probably would not complain at all about labor shortage, although they may have been a little hurried during haying and silo filling.

Some assurance must be given the farmer that he will have labor next year, or else he will not be interested in planting production goal acreage. Perhaps the point on which all this turns is the wage differential between farm and industrial help. Some farmers feel strongly that farm prices must be raised to allow farmers to pay somewhere near comparable wages. Others feel strongly that centralized government control of manpower is the only answer--that "the Government ought to have the power to tell a man where he can work and how much he'll get." These are considered emergency, war measures, and clearly necessary. All farmers agree that "Something has got to be done. We can't go on this way another year. If farmers don't get assurance of help they'll lay down and quit, and there'll be some folks goin' hungry." Farmers

are physically nervously exhausted. They "don't want to go through another year like this one."

Approximately 250 dairy farms have gone out of business in the County this year, and about 250 are expected to follow by the end of 1942.

Medical Service

In one or two areas there is only one doctor left, and the situation is becoming serious. Community pressure saved the men in the Sauquoit Valley from entering the army. Doctors are now able to give only medical care, no time for hypochondriacs. Several have limited hours when they may be called. This resulted, in one school, in keeping a fainted girl from getting medical attention for several hours; result--she had to be hospitalized.

Home nursing and Red Cross courses are experiencing a great boom. The Blue Cross Hospital Plan is not widespread among rural people, but is conducting a membership campaign now through Farm Bureau.



ONEIDA COUNTY SURVEY

Report No. 2

Reserve

Sources: Earl Foster, County Agent, Robert Hayden, Production Credit, Messrs. Drais and Roach, United States Employment Service, Mr. Zay, District Office (Utica), Office of Defense Transportation, Mr. Winslow, Secretary, Utica Chamber of Commerce, Mrs. Walkup, Secretary of District School Superintendents, Oneida County, and several farmers and rural residents.

A. (1) There was a shortage.

(2) Year-round skilled dairy hands are short. Cash crops (vegetable-beans, peas) farms were generally not short of labor. The usual sources of underemployed men have dried up, but women and high school children supplemented 1,500 Negroes from southern States to pretty well fill the gap.

The shortage on dairy farms was county wide except on small, family size farms, say, for example, under 100 acres and under 10 cows. On these farms operators have gotten along pretty well by themselves or with some help from wives and children.

(3) Scarcity of experienced workers owing mainly to the heavy drain which war industrial employment has made on farm manpower.

(4) The traditional role of women and children under 14 or thereabouts has been one which permitted them to assist with milking, do light chores, and take care of the chickens and the family (vegetable) garden. Women and children have generally been considered unable, or, at least, unfit to do "heavy work" -- such as cleaning stable, carrying milk cans, or almost any field work. The shortage of male help has greatly relaxed the rigor of traditional restrictions, however, although not without arousing some anxiety in farmers who "just don't think it looks right to see a woman working in the field." The shortage is related to class structure in this way too: in the past farm hands have occupied almost an "out-caste" status on some farms, have always been considered as members of a lower social class than operators. Although the principal attraction of industry has been economic opportunity, there has probably been an element of social class involved. Along with increasing their income, farm hands who enter industry raise their class status somewhat. Social class is also involved in labor on cash crops. Italian and Polish women (and some men) have done this job in the past, it generally being considered somewhat beneath "white" (native-born, old-line families) women. Now these foreign-born women are turning out in smaller numbers since, in many cases, their husbands, sons and even daughters, are employed in war plants and the income from picking beans or peas is not needed. Although in past years, farm operators in Oneida County would have little or nothing to do with Negroes for reasons of racial prejudice,

the shortage of white male help is beginning to break down this barrier. One large vegetable grower imported several truck loads of Negroes from southern States to pick beans and peas this year, and there are scattered instances of Negroes being employed on dairy farms during seasonal peaks and may stay on as steady help.

- (5) About 70 to 75 percent going into war industries. When the labor shortage first began to be felt, farmers opined, about farm laborers entering war plants, "Well, you can't blame 'em for going after that big money. They can make a lot more in the factory than a farmer can afford to pay." Lately, however, since the shortage has grown acute, farmers are beginning to feel that the Government has a responsibility to see that farmers get help enough to stay in production. At the present time some feel that "the Government ought to have the power to tell a man where he can work and how much he'll get." Some farmers, however, feel that the damage has been done, and that it is too late to "prohibit" now.
- (6) Farmers are inclined to minimize this movement. Actually about five to ten percent of the shortage is attributable to this. Very few farmers would feel that this should be prohibited next year. It should be noted too, that some small farm operators have quit and gone into factories.
- (7) About 15 to 20 percent. Farmers are often torn between a fear of being thought "unpatriotic" for requesting deferment and a fear of having to quit farming because of an insoluble labor problem if sons or workers are drafted. These men find it hard to express an unequivocal opinion. They are plainly confused, and often wind up with a decision they are not sure of and which they defend emotionally and with an almost neurotic aggressiveness. Almost all applauded the manpower directive to draft boards to defer dairy and poultry farm hands. "They liked the idea" a county official said "but they're from Missouri. They are still waiting to see whether the Government really means action." Such a directive would remove responsibility from farmers for making decisions as to who should be deferred. The factor of voluntary enlistment is not to be overlooked. Many farm boys volunteered for Army or Navy because they feared public opinion. They didn't want people asking them "What are you doing around here? Why aren't you in the Army?" In a sense they were razed into volunteering.

- B. (1) Farmers are willing to pay a fair wage of \$60 to \$70 a month (and board) for a single man, or \$100 to \$125 a month (and privileges) for a married man. Most workers would consider this a fair wage for farm work, but can make so much more money (\$30 to \$90 a week) in factories that they usually do not consider taking farm employment. The wage difference is almost that between two worlds -- there is little or no question of

their meeting, farmers say they simply cannot afford to pay "factory wages" and do not try to compete. Industrial workers or potential industrial workers, who return to or stay on farms do so for noneconomic reasons.

- (2) Farmers feel that farm wages cannot rise any more without a rise in farm prices. (See also ques. 3 infra). In 1942 farmers offered \$60 to \$70 a month for single men, \$100 to \$125 for married men, (plus board or privileges). In 1941 they were offering \$40 to \$50 for single men and \$80 to \$90 for married men. In 1940 and prior to that, during the 1930's, \$25 to \$40 for single men, and \$70 to \$75 for married men.

- (3) About 40 percent of the farmers would approve of a minimum wage rate to prevent competitive bidding for help, providing this was a "fair" wage. About 50 percent are opposed because
- (a) "You can't fix a flat wage because no two men are alike,"
 - (b) "Any wage you set would be too high for the farmer or too low for the man who can get a job in a factory,"
 - (3) "It wouldn't do any good because you couldn't get a man anyway."
- About 10 percent are undecided.

Some farmers have suggested that the Government "make up the difference between what a farmer can afford to pay and what a man can make in a factory." This has been suggested both in combination with drafting labor and alone.

- (4) United States Employment Service has had poor contacts with farmers in this county and has not been used much in the past. Farmers who tried United States Employment Service this year were usually disappointed because USES could not supply men. Farmers are generally disgusted with the Employment Service, will get labor through their own contacts, through ads in newspapers, will probably not use USES much next year. They hope for local labor, are not thinking about underemployed rural dwellers in distant areas.
- (5) There are almost no underemployed rural dwellers in this area at this time.
- (6) Except for importing southern Negroes (for vegetable picking), little thought has been given to importing workers. In this particular instance, one grower has been mainly responsible. He is widely known as having "a bad labor policy" and his principal aim has been to get labor as cheaply as possible. He gave little or no assurance to his laborers about working conditions, or housing and it is not generally known whether or not he made and/or kept agreements about wages. He has been accused of providing wretched housing for his laborers and fairly reliable reports bear out these accusations. An FSA camp proposed for this area was turned down and, it is said, one or two large growers were mainly responsible because they wanted the Government to have no hand in their labor arrangements. (This represents the views of vegetable growers, not dairy farmers.)

The general opinion is that imported workers (on vegetable crops at any rate) should be imported for peak work seasons rather than as permanent residents of the community. If it seemed that imported Negroes were going to settle in local communities, the general reaction would be one of indignant horror.

- (7) Little thought has been given to this because there are few underemployed farm operators in the area. The only possibility would be on one-man or small family size farms, which were canvassed a year ago by food-for-victory committeemen and, whenever possible, persuaded to increase production as much as possible.

USES reports that the demand for farm labor is falling off in this county. The County Agent states that USES is "not really in touch with the labor situation around here," has poor contacts with farmers. He considers this drop in "demand" to be artificial, a sign that farmers have become discouraged with USES because it does not get laborers for them, rather than that labor needs or shortages have decreased.

- C. (1) Farmers expect women, especially farm wives and daughters, to do the same or more work next year. This year farm women have had heavier employment in actual farm operations than at any time since World War I. This condition will obtain to the same, or a more heightened degree next year. At any rate farmers do not look for their women folk to have any less farm work to do next year.
- (2) Farm women generally expect to do as much as they can next year, which will be the same as or a little more than they did this year, because of the unavailability of male help, particularly skilled dairy hands. Most farm women seem to feel that they are the nearest approximation to the absent farm-hand, and, in many cases, see that if they do not pitch in and help, the farm business will have to contract or collapse.
- (3) Italian and Polish women from Utica and Rome are available, under the padrone (labor gang boss) system for picking beans, peas, cucumbers, etc. (See also Sec. A, Ques. 4). These women will probably be available in 1943, since most of them cannot get jobs in war plants because they are aliens. For the most part other urban and rural nonfarm women are not available for farm work. USES officials report no urban women (except as above) applying for farm work. Some rural nonfarm women were hired this year to pick apples, but their numbers were small and their efforts limited to this crop.

- 4) Most sources believe that rural and urban women of nonfarm experience will not be interested in doing farm work under any feasible conditions because: 1) Urban centers in Oneida County are experiencing a large employment boom. Wages are high and jobs plentiful for all employable men. Hence, their wives have no incentive to work on farms for extra income. 2) War industrial employment opportunities are large enough to absorb all the unmarried women or women from low income brackets who want work. Wages and type of work in these factories are generally more attractive than farm wages. 3) Traditionally there is no place for women (except farm wives and foreign-born picking help) on Oneida County farms. This tradition is strong enough in the minds of farmers and city women to make both parties consider the idea somewhat ridiculous and unworkable. Several farm women who have been doing field work suggested that urban women could help most by taking over household duties, thus releasing the more skilled farm women for actual farm operations.

D.

- 1) A few Colgate University students were available for part-time work this summer and farmers were generally pleased with them and would like to hire them for more work next year. On the whole, however, college students make up a very small source of labor.

Few (about 20) high school boys (14 and 15 years old) from Utica turned out for farm work this year under the USFS high school plan for farm cadets. At first farmers expected too much of the boys. "They (farmers) thought they were getting boys who could do as much as boys who had been brought up on farms. They just had to find out what the boys could do." Although boys were most useful in peak season work for driving tractor, driving truck, handling horse forks or loaders, some of them stayed on farms from haying time almost till school started. USFS men believe that farmers will want to hire more high school boys next year. "Farmers have been used to getting experienced help whenever they needed it", said a USFS official "and now they're finding they have to take what they can get and train it. It takes them a little time to get used to the idea of using inexperienced kids, but I think they'll take the faster next year." Farmers generally say they're afraid they'll have to use more high school boys next year.

- 2) Farmers prefer rural boys because they do not have to be taught so much, generally. However, some farmers are employing urban boys (See ques. 1).
- 3) Farmers are not thinking much about this possibility in this county. A USFS official opined that farmers would

prefer to teach the boys they hire themselves rather than have a school do it. "On the job training is better, because most farmers have their own special ways of doing things. They'd rather break the boys in themselves. As it is now, a lot of boys think they know much more about farming than they actually do, and teaching 'em would make them that much cockier." Not all farmers agree with this (see question 6).

- 4) Farmers are not thinking about this. (See also question 3). There are almost no "nonfarm out-of-school young people" who are not employed now.
- 5) At the beginning of the summer, the County Agent was asked to estimate a minimum wage for high school students. The Agent stated that a boy should be worth at least \$6 a week and he might be worth more. U.S.S. officials informed farmers of this, urged that boys' wages be increased if boys showed improvement, greater ability. To a man, farmers agreed, paid the exact minimum wage. Wages have been generally satisfactory to farmers, and for the most part to students. The farmers propose no changes, the kids suggest higher pay.
- 6) Many farmers feel that urban students would profit by instruction in the elements of farming. "Just so's they'd know what it's all about"—said one farmer, "you don't have to teach 'em every job, but just give 'em an idea of what a farm hand does." It seems that many boys had mistaken notions of what farm work would be like, and farmers feel that it would be better if these notions were cleared up. Some farmers feel that a teacher or coach or scoutmaster who knew something about farming, would supervise the boys while they were working.
- 7) School authorities are not contemplating any instruction in farm work other than the usual, standard course in vocational agriculture. There is no well formulated parent opinion on the subject.
- 8) See Question 1. Generally urban students are considered unable to do "heavy work" such as shoveling manure, pitching hay, loading corn and other jobs demanding physical strength. Certain skilled jobs such as milking, stripping cows, etc., are usually considered out of the range of boys. Ploughing, cultivating, and machine harvesting operations are generally reserved for older, more knowledgeable hands.

One U.S.S. official said that he felt the schools could do (and had not done) the job of "selling" farm work to their students. "The fact hasn't been made in fact that they're ignorant enough in getting this job done."

Almost all farmers feel that the worst fault of schoolboy labor is its irresponsibility, its tendency to get around as play on the job. This leads to carelessness, damaged crops, and sometimes damaged equipment.

E. Very little attention has been paid to this source of labor in this county. The County Agent has a list of names of business and professional men in New Hartford who have agreed to spend some time at farm work if the labor shortage became acute in certain cash crops (vegetables, mainly.) These men have never been called on. The Utica Chamber of Commerce has formulated a plan for business or professional men to do farm work, and is not planning to do so. The Secretary of the Chamber of Commerce is hostile to the idea. There are several good reasons why no plan has been put forth:

- a) Utica, Rome, and, to a lesser degree, other towns in the county are booming with industrial employment. The ensuing prosperity has brought full-time employment to nearly every employable man (and many women) in these towns. No one feels he has the time to spend on farm work.
- b) The larger towns regard themselves as industrial centers, rather than commercial centers in an agricultural region. Hence their first thoughts are for industry rather than for farmers.
- c) The larger cities are too large and complex to be feasible for a plan that involved shutting down the whole town for even a day.
- d) The labor shortage has been acute not in seasonal crops, but on dairy farms where year-round, skilled help is needed. The (agriculturally) unskilled workmen would actually be of little or no help to farmers around here. There is no general peak of labor needs in this county.

F. Very little thought has been given to this possibility in this county. Most of the industrial plants in the area provide workers with eight to ten hours work a day, seven days a week, and do not have a labor surplus so that they would not be pleased with the idea of releasing workers for farm employment.

- 1) Although farmers would like the able assistance of former farm hands now in factories during haying, threshing and silo filling, most farmers would be loath to ask for this help on the grounds that the absence of these men would hamper war production. (Almost all factories in the area are producing directly for the war effort.) Farmers are inclined to wonder whether the factory workers so released would actually come to work on farms in most cases. They say that fully employed industrial workers would have little incentive to spend a free day at farm work.
- 2) Most farmers feel that they can afford to pay not more than the going wage for experienced farm help, that it would be unfair to regular workers if they did pay more. No farmers suggested Government wage subsidies.

- 3) & 4) This year, in a few instances, factory workers on night shifts worked a few hours a day picking apples, potatoes, peas and beans, and, occasionally, at haying and silo filling. This was not a widespread, mass movement; the men were usually relatives, neighbors or friends of farmers, they helped, and the arrangements were made on the basis of this personal bond. Most farmers feel that they need steady, dependable help both year-round and in peak work seasons. They would consider strangers for a two or three hour period only moderately helpful, since they would probably have to be broken in to each farmer's special method of doing a job, might not be as physically fit as other members of the gang (because they had been doing factory, not farm work), might have to leave the job before it was finished, etc. Farmers offer many objections to this idea, in general. Factory workers often protest that they do not have time to do extra work, or that they are too fatigued after their industrial employment. (Employees of Savage Arms work at 12 hour shifts, so this complaint is often sincere.)

In all, it seems probable that factory workers will continue to be employed part-time on farms next year on the basis of informal personal relationships rather than on the basis of formal plans made by any agency, private or public.

- 5) The people to whom this was mentioned had obviously not given the matter much thought and were unprepared to give opinions on it. Their replies were vague, and ranged from mild approval to crabbed opposition.

G.

- 1) Up to the present time farmers have been getting along well under the rationing system. They have had to reduce pleasure trips and visits to friends, relatives in distant places, but the weekly trip to town has, in most cases, been retained in the farm schedule.

Rationing of gas to farm trucks has been more liberal, and it is probable that many short trips which would formerly have been made in the car are now made in the truck.

In a good many instances, trips have been pooled, and neighbors are drawing each others milk, apples, etc., and bringing loads of supplies back from town.

Up to the present, in short, there has been almost no complaint about rationed gasoline.

The new ODT "Certificate of Wartime Necessity," however, may be the source of a lot of complaints from farmers. To date, few farmers have received their certificate, although most have filed applications, which are being processed by ODT in Detroit, Michigan. Of those who have received certificates, several have been granted much less mileage (and, hence, gasoline) than they applied for. Farmers who have been accustomed to travel 200 to 250 miles a month have been cut, in some cases, to 60 to 70 miles. One county official remarked: "It's been spotty so far. Some farmers have gotten all they applied for, while others have been cut way down. I hate to say this, but it all seems to depend on the whim of some damn clerk in Detroit." Another man said: "The trouble is, it's being handled from Detroit by people who don't know the local situation." (Machinery for appeal of ODT decisions is now being set up by the County War Board). An ODT official in the county stated that many farmers' applications were rejected because they were incompletely or incorrectly filled out.

All in all, this promises to lead to some confusion and much complaint, because of the irregular, non-schedule nature of farm truck operation and an intense dislike of regulation that most farmers have.

